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1. (Currently Amended) A method for reallocating switching circuitry in a switching fabric to permit data transfer among a plurality of interface units each having a plurality of data ports, the switching fabric being partitionable into a plurality of switch planes such that each switch plane is assignable to transfer data associated with a like data port of the plurality of interface units and each switch plane including multiple switching [channels] data communication links each being assignable to transfer data associated with one data port of one of the interface units, the method comprising:

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determining a number of interface units including the plurality of data ports connected to the switching fabric;

determining a number of switching [channels] data communication links in each switching plane; and

* if the number of data ports in the interface units is less than the number of switching [channels] data communication links in each switch plane, for at least one of the plurality of switch planes, assigning a first [channel] data communication link in the switch plane to transfer data associated with a first data port of a first interface unit and assigning a second [channel] data communication link in the switch plane to transfer data associated with a second data port of the first interface unit.

* not supported by spec. p2, L4.5

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein each interface unit comprises twelve data ports.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein each switch plane comprises sixteen switching [channels] data communication links.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein switching circuitry is reallocated such that the number of switching planes in the switching fabric can be reduced.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the switching circuitry is reallocated such that the number of switch planes in the switching fabric can be reduced by one half.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein switching channels in the switch plane are assigned to data ports via an allocated table stored in a memory, wherein the allocation table defines a relationship between data ports and data communication links.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the switching circuitry is reallocated by updating the allocation table.

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for reallocating switching circuitry in a switching fabric to permit data transfer among a plurality of interface units each having a plurality of data ports, the switching fabric being partitionable into a plurality of switch planes such that each switch plane is assignable to transfer data associated with a like data port of the plurality of interface units and each switch plane including multiple switching [channels] data communication links each being assignable to transfer data associated with one data port of one of the interface units, the apparatus comprising:

a memory for storing an allocated table that stores assignments of the switching [channels] data communication links to data ports of the interface units; and

a processor for [(1)] (i) determining a number of interface units connected to the switching fabric, (ii) determining a number of switching [channels] data communication links in each switch plane, and (iii) if the number of interface units is less than the number of switching [channels] data communication links in each switch plane, for at least one of the plurality of

switch planes, assigning a first [channel] data communication link in the switch plane to transfer data associated with a first data port of a first interface unit and assigning a second [channel] data communication link in the switch plane to transfer data associated with a second data port of the first interface unit.

9. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the processor updates the allocation table to include new assignments of switching [channels] data communication links to data ports of the interface units.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [1] 8, wherein each interface unit comprises twelve data ports.

a1 11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [1] 8, wherein each switch plane comprises sixteen switching [channels] data communication links.

12. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [1] 8, wherein switching circuitry is reallocated such that the number of switching planes in the switching fabric can be reduced.

13. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [1] 8, wherein the switching circuitry is reallocated such that the number of switch planes in the switching fabric can be reduced by one half.

14. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [6] 8, wherein the switching circuitry is reallocated by updating the allocation table.